

# ANNUAL REPORT

FURNISHED TO THE

## URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL OF WEDNESFIELD

For the Year 1897

BY


ARTHUR HANDS

Medical Officer of Health

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WOLVERHAMPTON

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# ANNUAL REPORT.

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IN presenting my Annual Report for 1897 to the Council, I have again to congratulate them on a low death-rate, which is a pleasing characteristic of the year—although on the other hand the sanitary record of Wednesfield has been somewhat marred by an unfortunate outbreak of Scarlatina, which occurred principally in its latter months.

POPULATION.—The estimated population of Wednesfield to the middle of June, 1898, is 5,020.

DEATHS.—Sixty-one deaths took place (10 less than the previous year), and give a rate of 12·1 per thousand of the population.

Three deaths resulted from Diphtheria; 1 from Enteric Fever; 6 from Marasmus; 3 from Measles; 1 from Whooping Cough; 4 from Diarrhœa; 2 from Cancer; 3 from Phthisis; 9 from Bronchial and Chest Affections; 1 from Injuries; and 18 from all other diseases; and in 7 cases inquests were held—out of which latter number 3 resulted from Drowning.

Several persons attained longevity—4 having died at the advanced ages of 78, 80, 86 and 90 respectively.

Fifteen died under the age of 1 year; 11 between the ages of 1 and 5 years; 4 between 5 and 15; 2 between 15 and 25; 16 between 25 and 65; and 13 at the age of 65 and upwards.

Forty deaths occurred in Wednesfield proper; 13 in the Wood End district; 7 at Marsh End; and 1 at the Scotlands.

BIRTHS.—One-hundred-and-thirty-four births took place—of which number 72 were males and 62 females—and these numbers give a rate of 24·7 per thousand. There were 73 births in excess of deaths.

The following Table gives the death-rate in previous years, which may interest the Council and serve as a means of comparison:—

1879	..	19·1	1888	..	18·6
1880	..	18·9	1889	..	17·8
1881	..	19·5	1891	..	17·5
1882	..	17·0	1892	..	17·3
1883	..	15·2	1893	..	13·2
1884	..	15·4	1894	..	12·6
1885	..	20·0	1895	..	17·4
1886	..	12·7	1896	..	13·2
1887	..	12·8	1897	..	12·1

INFANT MORTALITY.—Fifteen deaths of children under the age 1 year took place, giving a rate of 110 per thousand of registered births; and although the proportion is still too high, yet it compares favourably with other places, being the fourth lowest among the Urban Districts of Staffordshire as far as the returns for 1896 show.

In the latter year the number of infantile deaths was 154 for every thousand births, so there is a very marked improvement in this direction.

Among the probable causes of a high death-rate among infants is the improvident marriages of young people, whose constitutions are not well developed, and as a consequence the children born to them are often very puny, rickety, or immature, and so are prone to succumb where stronger children would survive; but the chief cause, no doubt, is improper or injudicious feeding on the part of parents,—not wilfully, but as a result of inadequate instructions on the subject; for it is not an uncommon thing to find a young baby being fed upon the same kind of food as older children, and sooner or later, in all probability, death from either Marasmus, Diarrhœa, or Convulsions will attest to the error.

The true remedy for this lies in the instruction of mothers in the principles of infant nursing and feeding, and in some districts in the county both literature is distributed, and lectures given on the subject, which seem to be much appreciated by the public, and, no doubt, will lead to good results in the future; an example Wednesfield will, it is to be hoped, emulate bye-and-bye. Infants should be fed at the breast when possible, and when cows' milk is substituted it should be boiled, and afterwards cooled in a clean place, free from dust, and all vessels, feeding bottles, and things should be kept scrupulously clean. Dr. Geo. Reid, the Consulting Medical Officer to the County Council, was among the first to draw attention to the fact, that in those places where infants were left in charge of other persons while their mothers were out at work, the infant mortality was highest; but this state of affairs does not much affect us in Wednesfield, as there are comparatively few so employed.

ZYMOTIC DISEASES.—Twelve deaths have resulted from this class of disease—exactly the same number as in



1896—and this number gives a zymotic rate of 2·3. The deaths include 3 from Diphtheria; 1 from Enteric Fever; 3 from Measles; 1 from Whooping Cough; and 4 from Diarrhœa.

The following Table gives the zymotic-rate in previous years:—

1882	..	4·0	1891	..	1·4
1883	..	2·8	1892	..	2·5
1886	..	3·2	1893	..	2·2
1887	..	2·2	1895	..	1·8
1889	..	2·2	1896	..	2·8

NOTIFICATIONS OF CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES.—Forty-three cases of Scarlatina; 4 of Enteric Fever; 4 of Erysipelas; and 3 of Diphtheria were notified; and of the former disease 29 were treated in the Isolation Hospital, and the remaining 14 at the homes of the patients.

SCARLET FEVER.—The first case of this disease was notified on April 29th, and the epidemic continued throughout the year, more or less—the greater number of cases occurring in the months of October and November; altogether there were 43 notified, but probably there were many more which escaped observation on, account of the mildness of the type of the disease from which no fatality arose, all those treated in the Hospital, as well as those at home, having recovered. There is not so much objection shown to treatment in the Isolation Hospital as one might expect, and when the public are more used to it, still less, I think, will be shown.

MARASMUS.—Six deaths resulted from this cause, and all were infants or very young children. Parents often forget that milk is the proper food for infants, and they give them strong diet before they are able to assimilate it, and by so doing frequently engender this disease.

PHTHISIS.—I have never presented an Annual Report to the Council without the inclusion of some deaths from this cause, and this year there is no exception to the rule, as three cases resulted fatally! It is a curious fact that the disease is more prevalent in the North Road than any other portion of the district, and the same may be said of Enteric Fever; and it is to be hoped when the sewerage is completed, and the road properly drained, it will alter very much for the better, for at present it appears to be the most unhealthy portions of Wednesfield, while the Scotlands is the most healthy.

DIPHTHERIA.—Two cases died at the same house in Well Lane, but an inspection of it did not reveal the exact cause of the complaint; although as the building was a new one, it is possible that dampness of the sub-soil was an exciting cause.

ENTERIC FEVER.—One case of this complaint on the North Road terminated fatally, out of six cases notified.

I made an inspection of the back premises, and found some obvious nuisances existing—such as water lying about the yard; an overladen ashpit; and some tubs of pig wash, or stale water about—and I called the attention of the Inspector of Nuisances to them, with the view to their removal. As mentioned elsewhere in my report, North Road generally is very wet during the bad weather, and I feel convinced the want of suitable drainage has something to do with both the frequent occurrence of Phthisis and Enteric Fever in this particular locality.

I received a notification of another case on the Lichfield Road, near the Cross Guns Inn. I fear the drinking water was probably contaminated in some way,

but owing to an unfortunate breakage in the pump I was unable to analyse a sample of it.

ISOLATION HOSPITAL.—There was considerable disadvantage in treating patients here in the latter portion of the year on account of the Hospital being rather over-crowded, and there being two of the assistant-nurses down with the disease themselves, and the head-nurse too, was ill, and confined to her bed for some time; but in spite of these drawbacks things went on as well as could be expected, and all the patients recovered, a circumstance of a very gratifying nature.

I attended two meetings of the conjoint Committee, and at the first of them suggested one or two things which I considered would place the Hospital in a better condition for the treatment of the sick.

They were:—That an apparatus should be provided for the disinfection of the patients, and of their clothing—and things; that an exit should be made from the wards to obviate the disadvantage of the nurses going through the front entrance round to the W.C.'s with everything; and that either a new ambulance should be obtained, or that the old one should have the inside linings strapped off and painted white, so that it could be washed and cleaned, and that a suitable place should be erected in which it could be kept dry.

I attended a second meeting in consequence of a resolution of the Committee that no more cases from the Cottage Homes should be admitted to the Hospital. On account partly of this, and partly because the Hospital being too full, five cases were treated in a cottage by themselves at the former place, but at the utmost inconvenience to those concerned. As I pointed out to the Committee, this meant that the schools had to be closed; all the other cottages placed in quarantine;



additional help obtained in the way of nursing; and provision made for all the children coming in from the Workhouse, to be kept for a much longer period than usual away from the others. Altogether, both work, and education at the Homes was much impeded by the resolution, and it is only within the last few weeks that things there have resumed their normal course again. In view of these difficulties, I hope the Committee may see its way clear to rescind the resolution, as I consider the children at the Homes ought to have the privilege of being treated at the Hospital, as well as any others in the district. I may say the Borough Hospital admitted cases of Scarlatina without any difficulty before the establishment of the Isolation Hospital here.

The Committee, I believe, are about to have laid on, the mains of the Waterworks Co. This will be a great desideratum, as the method of having the water brought in a water cart, and kept in an iron tank, is rather objectionable; the tap-water may prove of service also in case of a fire, which is certainly possible considering the fact that oil-lamps are used for lighting purposes, and stoves for heating purposes. It would have been much safer in every way, in my opinion, if the wards had been heated with hot-water pipes, as it is almost impossible to keep a steady temperature with coal stoves, as the temperature is either too high or too low.

The Committee, too, have resolved to put up an additional bed-room for a nurse, which is much required, as during the epidemic one of the assistants had either to go home to sleep or to remain in the wards among the patients! I regret that in a case at New Cross a second child appeared to take the disease on the return of another from the Hospital. There are certainly other

ways in which the child could have contracted the disease, but I venture to affirm that the provision of a disinfecting apparatus would effectually prevent any contagion being brought away from thence, either by the children themselves or in their clothing.

COTTAGE HOMES.—There has been a good deal of sickness here of one kind or other during the year, but it is a very gratifying circumstance that no death from any cause has taken place for two years past, although there have been many narrow escapes, especially from children suffering from Pneumonia as a result of Measles; the latter disease being rather prevalent in the earlier months of the year, and in the latter we had an epidemic of Scarlatina with which to contend. As mentioned elsewhere in my report, there were twelve cases of this disease in all, of which number seven were treated in the Hospital.

There have been many cases of skin diseases of various kinds—principally Eczema, Scald-head, and Ring-worm; but most of them were of a trivial nature, and such as would hardly be taken notice of outside, but owing to their very contagious character, the slightest case of such is isolated, and treated as though it was the most severe. I may say, in my opinion, there is insufficient accommodation for the isolation of the sick, as I pointed out in the year 1894. The children are as a rule very healthy, and are well-cared for by the Committee and Officers; and when they are sick they have better nursing and attention than many in better circumstances could receive.

VACCINATION.—In my report for the year 1896, I was a little sanguine that, owing presumably to calf-lymph being used exclusively at the public station, that the number of vaccinations was gradually increasing;

but I regret to say this has been far from being the case during the year 1897, and the number of them has diminished to a very low ebb indeed. In years gone by the vaccination station at Heath Town was often crowded with people bringing their children for this purpose; but things are very much changed since then, as it is not at all unusual to find no one at all at the station for weeks in succession.

There were 134 births in Wednesfield during the year, and very probably more than 300 in Heath Town, which would bring up the total to at least 434, and out of this number *only* 68 were vaccinated at the public station. This, I venture to affirm, is a very serious state of affairs, and one which should receive the earnest attention of the Council.

The following statistic will furnish a good object lesson on the subject, and show more accurately the falling off in numbers:—

1891	146 vaccinations.	1895	63 vaccinations.
1892	116 „	1896	82 „
1893	90 „	1897	68 „
1894	169 „		

So it will be seen that with the exception of 1895, the number of vaccinations recorded in 1897 was the lowest for the last seven years. It will be noticed that the number was considerably higher in 1894, but that was on account of the epidemic of Small-Pox which then existed. It will be admitted that the above figures show very clearly the decadence of vaccination in the district, and should another epidemic occur the consequences would probably be disastrous, like in previous epidemics we have experienced in the neighbourhood. As the body having charge of the public health, the Council in my opinion would be well-advised if they would bring the matter



before the Board of Guardians, and try to get them to put this wholesome Act in force. As mentioned in my last annual report, the District Council, is, in the opinion of many Medical Officers, the proper body to have charge of all measures relating to the prevention of disease, including vaccination.

SEWERAGE.—The Council is now proceeding with the preliminaries of a comprehensive system of sewerage, which has received the sanction of the Local Government Board, and which when completed will probably benefit Wednesfield very much, indeed both in a Sanitary as well as from a commercial point of view.

MAKING AND CURBING OF ROADS.—As mentioned in my last annual report, part of Graiseley Lane and the North Road are in a very bad state during the winter months, the latter being almost impassable for mud, and the Council would, in my opinion, do well to have them properly made, curbed, and channelled, which would be an immense improvement, both as regards the comfort of those using the road, and also to the health of those living in them. Phthisis has occurred again and again in the latter road, and the general damp state of the road, together with the absence (at present) of proper drainage may have something to do with its incidence there.

TRADE.—There has not been nearly so much poverty as in many former years, and several things point to improved conditions in the circumstances of the people, one among them being the comparatively few notes obtained for Parish relief or otherwise,

NEW BUILDINGS.—There have been about twelve new houses erected during the year—so that Wednesfield is slowly growing, and in the near future it is possible that



considerable expansion may take place, especially when the Sewerage Scheme is completed.

In conclusion, my best thanks are due to the Council for the consideration given to the reports made to them from time to time. Appended hereto are Tables A, B, and C, as required by the Local Government Board and County Council.

I am, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

ARTHUR HANDS.

To J. W. STIRK, ESQ.,  
Clerk to the Council.



## TABLE A.

Shewing the Deaths classified according to Diseases,  
and Ages, &c.

At all ages.	Under 1 year.	1 year and under 5.	5 years and under 15.	15 years and under 25.	25 years and under 65.	65 years and upwards.
61	15	11	4	2	16	13

## DEATHS.

	Under 5.	Over 5.
From Smallpox .. ..	0	0
„ Scarlatina .. ..	0	0
„ Diphtheria .. ..	2	1
„ Membranous Croup ..	0	0
„ Cancer .. ..	0	2
„ Enteric or Typhoid Fever ..	0	1
„ Marasmus .. ..	6	0
„ Puerperal Fever .. ..	0	0
„ Senile Decay .. ..	0	0
„ Erysipelas .. ..	0	0
„ Measles .. ..	2	1
„ Whooping Cough .. ..	1	0
„ Diarrhœa and Dysentery ..	3	1
„ Phthisis .. ..	0	3
„ Bronchitis, Pneumonia & Pleurisy ..	1	8
„ Heart Diseases .. ..	0	3
„ Injuries .. ..	0	1
„ All other Diseases .. ..	8	10
„ Inquests .. ..	2	5
Total	25	36

Deaths :—Equal to a Death-rate of 12·1 per thousand.

Births: Males 72  
 „ Females 62 } equal to a Birth-rate of 24·7 per 1,000.  
 Total 134

Population, Midsummer, 1897 .. 5,020.

Area in Acres .. 2,539.

# TABLE B.

New Cases of Infectious Sickness coming to the knowledge of the Medical Officer of Health during the year 1897, enumerating the Number of Houses Infected, the Total Number of Deaths, also the Number of Cases Treated in Infectious Hospitals.

	Scarlatina.	Diphtheria.	Enteric Fever.	Diarrhoea.	Erysipelas.	Measles.	Whooping Cough.
Houses infected            ..            ..	24	1	5	4	4	—	1
Total cases reported among persons belong- ing to District            ..            ..	33	3	5	4	4	3	1
Total deaths reported among persons belonging to District            ..            ..	—	3	1	4	4	3	1
Cases treated in Hospital among persons belonging to District            ..            ..	29	—	—	—	—	—	—

The Notification of Infectious Diseases is Compulsory.  
 Measles and Whooping Cough are not included among the Diseases notified.  
 An Isolation Hospital is available for the District.

## TABLE C.

## List of Nuisances dealt with.

			Inspections and Observations made.	Notice served.	Nuisances abated.
Dwelling Houses and Schools—					
Foul Conditions	..	..	8	4	4
Over-crowding	..	..	16	8	8
Unfit for Habitation	..	..	2	1	1
Dairies and Milkshops. Inspections made, but no record kept.					
Ashpits and Privies	..	..	250	36	125
Deposits of Refuse and Manure	..	..	6	3	3
House Drainage—					
Defective Traps	..	..	2	1	1
Other Faults (Defective Drainage and Drain Pipes stopped up)			16	8	8
Pigsties	..	..	16	8	8
Animals improperly kept	..	..	6	3	3
Other Nuisances (Stale Pig Wash)	..	..	6	3	3
Totals	..	..	328	75	164

4 Houses were Disinfected after Infectious Disease.

JOSEPH TOMKYS,

Inspector of Nuisances.